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#### XIV.—SHAFTESBURY AND THE ETHICAL POETS IN ENGLAND, 1700-1760

One of the notable changes in English literature during the eighteenth century is a growth in altruism. It is a change which involves not only a breaking down of the old aristocratic indifference to the lower classes of society during the Restoration, but the establishment of a new ethical theory; literature displayed a broader human interest and assigned a new reason for its sympathy. It is usually assumed that the difference is due principally to the influx of French philosophy. This assumption at least minimizes the importance of a development which had taken place in the literature of England itself before the general interest in Rousseau. The change, especially in poetry, is to be traced largely, I think, to the *Characteristics* (1711) of Lord Shaftesbury, whose importance as a literary influence in England has never been duly recognized.<sup>1</sup> It has long since been established that his system of philosophy constitutes a turning-point in the history of pure speculation, especially in ethics; it has more recently been shown also that he is responsible for many of the moral ideas which inform the popular literature of Ger-

<sup>1</sup>The ethical works of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), which were known to the eighteenth century were first published in the following order: (1) *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, published without authority by John Toland, 1699; (2) *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, 1708; (3) *The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody*, 1709; (4) *Sensus Communis, an Essay upon the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, 1709; (5) *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, 1710; (6) *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, 1711. This contains the previous essays and also *Miscellaneous Reflections*.

many from Haller to Herder.<sup>2</sup> But his influence upon the popular writers of his own country has received scant notice.

The purpose of the present investigation is to show that the adoption of his ideas by popular writers in England was actually widespread, and that, since theology and ethics were subjects of vital interest, the *Characteristics* had a large part in determining the content of English literature. In general, popular works were affected very much as the more formal treatises of philosophy were; various writers reproduced most of Shaftesbury's tenets, but collectively they were indebted to him chiefly for a new standard of morals. Their response, like that of the philosophers, was due primarily to his virtuoso theory of benevolence. Through the constant repetition of this doctrine by his imitators, the "founder of the benevolent school of philosophy" became largely responsible for the vigorous literary interest in philanthropy which characterizes all English literature of the mid-century. Previously neither society nor literature had been indifferent to social evils, as the early work of Defoe and the essays of Addison and Steele testify; but the essayists were proceeding upon a *rationale* which was already weakening under the attacks of deism, and which could never have

<sup>2</sup> Adolph Frey, *Albrecht von Haller und seine Bedeutung für die deutsche Literatur*, Leipzig, 1879, pp. 19 ff.; H. Hettner, *Literaturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 1. Teil, 5. Aufl., Braunschweig, 1894; I. C. Hatch, *Der Einfluss Shaftesburys auf Herder*, *St. zur vergl. Lit.-gesch.*, 1, pp. 68 ff. (1901); O. F. Walzel, *Shaftesbury und das deutsche Geistesleben des 18. Jahrhunderts*, G R M, 1, pp. 416 ff. (1909); K. Berger, *Schiller, Werke*, München, 1910, 1, p. 106; Charles Elson, *Wieland and Shaftesbury*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1913; Herbert Grudzinski, *Shaftesburys Einfluss auf Ch. M. Wieland. Mit einer Einleitung über den Einfluss Shaftesburys auf die deutsche Literatur bis 1760*, Stuttgart, 1913.

engaged the lively interests of literature. Shaftesbury's scheme of the social affections infused a new vigor into the cause and established philanthropy upon a basis which allowed a larger play of sentiment. The quickening of literary interest which resulted is especially evident in poetry; versified "benevolence" was a literary innovation that sprang directly from the new and fashionable ethics of the *Characteristics*. Largely for this reason, I have confined myself here to a special study of verse only.

An exhaustive treatment of the subject would demand as a preliminary to the study of the poetry itself a detailed examination of Shaftesbury's system and its relation to current theory and practice. Such an examination would show clearly why his popularity was delayed until several years after his death and then became general. But it must suffice here to deal with his philosophy and these historical conditions in mere outline.

## I

Aside from the attractiveness of his style, Shaftesbury appealed to his age chiefly because he effectually antagonized two schools of thought out of harmony with growing tendencies of the time—the strict orthodoxy of the Church and the egoistic philosophy of Hobbes. These themselves were in open strife on various fundamental questions, and Shaftesbury was quite as much opposed to one as to the other. In his own system there is little that is strictly original; most of it is merely the assimilation and perfected statement of ideas which the Cambridge Platonists, Cumberland, and other Latitudinarians had imported from Greek philosophy.<sup>1</sup> The views he advanced in oppo-

<sup>1</sup> Shaftesbury edited Whichcote's sermons in 1698. For references to Cudworth, see *Characteristics*, ed. J. M. Robertson, 2 vols., New

sition to both Hobbes and the Church met with a favorable response because they satisfied an inclination of the age that needed only an authoritative direction.

His system of benevolence, formulated in opposition to Hobbes, rests upon a theology which was then dangerous heresy. The starting point is the deistic conception which in its full development assumes that the Deity is sufficiently revealed through natural phenomena, and that human reason unaided is capable of forming an adequate notion of God. Revelation, therefore, and all miraculous intervention it sets aside as not only superfluous but derogatory to the character of the Deity.<sup>2</sup> The "free thinkers" found their chief inspiration in the regularity and harmony of the physical universe; to them nature was literally the open Bible, and the contemplation and worship of it supplied the place of more formal religious devotion. Shaftesbury, for example, calls it the "wise Substitute of Providence." This is a conception more poetic than the one which it opposed, and it had the additional advantage of satisfying the growing interest in natural science. While the orthodox found difficulty in adjusting the biblical account to recent discoveries in chemistry, physics, and astronomy, especially those of Newton, the deists hailed in all these marvels the appropriate marks of the Creator with whom they had replaced the provincial God of the Hebrews. Associated with this conception of God as a being of unlimited power and majesty worthy

York, 1900 (to which all references below) II, pp. 50, 196, and Letter to Jean Le Clerc, March 6, 1705-6, in *Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen*, ed. Benjamin Rand, London, 1900 (referred to hereafter as *Regimen*) p. 352; for More's influence, *Characteristics*, II, pp. 197-9, and Editor's note, I, p. 5. Robertson's novel view (I, pp. xxxix ff. and notes) that Shaftesbury was indebted mainly to Spinoza is unconvincing.

<sup>2</sup> *Characteristics*, II, pp. 89-95.

of the physical universe he had created was the complementary moral view that he was the embodiment of supreme goodness. In the process of rehabilitation the ancient Deity was rapidly stripped of such stern attributes as vengeance, if not justice, and regarded merely as the Spirit of Benevolence. Out of this conception grows naturally the Platonic idea that the Creator acted for the happiness of man and placed him in the best possible of all worlds. The apparent ill of the individual part is necessary to the system of the universe as a whole; our view is limited, and "a mind which sees not infinitely can see nothing fully, and must therefore frequently see that as imperfect which in itself is really perfect."<sup>3</sup> A mere link in the vast chain of being, man is guilty of sheer folly when he laments his physical weakness or otherwise complains of the economy of nature.<sup>4</sup> This conclusion, which we instantly associate with Pope's *Essay on Man*, represents the popular theology that underlies most of the poetry to be examined; it gave rise to a pseudo-science and an optimism inseparably connected with the ethical ideas of the entire school. Such theology was, of course, not confined to Shaftesbury or even to the deists; but the *Characteristics* apparently did more to popularize it than all the other philosophical works combined.

Shaftesbury's ethical theory is the direct result of this theology, which, by undermining faith in the Scriptures, destroyed the force of biblical precept as a guide in conduct. In his protest against various harsh views of the Christian dogma and the egoism of Hobbes, he anticipated much of Rousseau's respect for natural man. On the theoretic side his system derives largely from Plato and

<sup>3</sup> *Characteristics*, II, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, II, pp. 22, 73, 74.

Plato's imitators; <sup>5</sup> but for the practical part it is indebted even more to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. <sup>6</sup> The essence of it, so far as it affected poetry, is comprehended under the following views:

(1) Man is naturally a virtuous being, and is endowed with a "moral sense" which distinguishes good from evil as spontaneously as the ear distinguishes between harmony and discord. Although the "moral sense," in common with all other endowments, requires cultivation, man becomes virtuous merely by following the preferences of this instinct. To be good he needs only to be natural. <sup>7</sup>

(2) Just as the "moral sense" is independent "even of any settled notion of God" or any other idea acquired by experience, Virtue itself is an independent good, immutable and eternal. It is to be sought, therefore, for its own intrinsic beauty—what Plato calls *Tò Καλόν* and Horace the *dulce et decorum* of virtue—regardless of all considerations of future reward and punishment. <sup>8</sup> This doctrine gave immediate offense to the Church, which, according to Shaftesbury, was employing a method of "the rod and sweetmeat" that destroyed the natural relish for goodness itself and reduced virtue to a mercenary consideration. <sup>9</sup> Instead of the sordid utilitarianism of the ortho-

<sup>5</sup> It is inaccurate to speak of his entire system as Platonism, though this was the practice in the eighteenth century. In my own use of the term I have tried to confine it to ideas of Shaftesbury's which are to be found in Plato.

<sup>6</sup> *Regimen*, *passim*. He derived much also from Horace (see Letter to Pierre Costé, Oct. 1, 1706, *idem*, p. 355).

<sup>7</sup> *Characteristics*, I, pp. 251-66. Cf. II, pp. 135-41; also *Regimen*, pp. 403-5, 413-7. Shaftesbury is supposed to have invented the phrase "moral sense"; but see More's *Divine Dialogues*, Dial. II, Sec. xviii.

<sup>8</sup> He would retain the ancient doctrine of the Church only to terrify the ignorant and depraved (*Characteristics*, II, p. 265).

<sup>9</sup> *Characteristics*, II, p. 41. Cf. I, pp. 66, 287.

dox, Shaftesbury proposed as the only reward of virtuous conduct the immediate satisfaction it produces, which is the only genuine happiness to be attained by man.<sup>10</sup>

(3) The natural beauty of virtue was further recommended to the smart set of "free thinkers" by his "virtuoso" identification of the Good and the Beautiful. To him virtue meant merely a perfect development of æsthetic sensibility. It is, therefore, the mark *par excellence* of a gentleman. There is, he said, a harmony of "inward numbers" as of outward, an observance of symmetry and proportion in morality as in architecture. The moral world as a whole is but another manifestation of the beauty which pervades and harmonizes the "bright, outward and visible world." In it also appears imperfection of detail; but in spite of apparent confusion, if apprehended "the order of the moral world would equal that of the natural."<sup>11</sup> Goodness, then, is harmony with nature; "knavery is mere dissonance and disproportion."<sup>12</sup> Man should cultivate his taste in morality as in any other fine art.<sup>13</sup>

(4) In opposition to Hobbes's view that man is by nature wholly selfish, and that compassion is a sign of weakness, Shaftesbury asserted that compassion, or benevolence, is not only instinctive in man, but is the highest virtue to which he attains. Man is provided, said Shaftesbury, with two sets of affection—the selfish and the social passions—both instinctive and both necessary for the preservation of the race.<sup>14</sup> To resolve all human motive into selfishness and deny the naturalness of the unselfish

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, I, p. 294.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, II, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, I, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> See M. F. Libby, *Influence of the Idea of Aesthetic Proportion on the Ethics of Shaftesbury*, Worcester, Mass., 1901; W. G. Howard, *Good Taste and Conscience*, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXV, pp. 486 ff.

<sup>14</sup> He includes also a third, the "unnatural affections" (I, p. 286).



propensities, as Hobbes and the other egoists had done, was to contradict the palpable facts of nature. Moreover, there is no conflict between the two sets of instinct; for the good of the individual can be secured only by promoting the welfare of society.<sup>15</sup> The very fact that man is born helpless is an indication that he was intended never to exist out of the social state; Hobbes's theory of a "state of nature" and a "social compact" is a mere figment, for unsocial man is inconceivable.<sup>16</sup> In defining the conduct which leads to the perfection and happiness incident to virtue, Shaftesbury has, therefore, remarkably little to say concerning those acts which spring from the selfish motive and apply to man as he is considered apart from his fellows; the whole force of his teaching is to exalt the naturalness and beauty of universal benevolence,<sup>17</sup> which he calls the perfection of the "natural temper." Since compassion is the supreme form of moral beauty, the neglect of it is the greatest of all offenses against nature's ordained harmony. While the Church was urging that charity returns to the donor a hundredfold, Shaftesbury appealed to the well-bred by representing the compassionate man as the perfection of human nature, and the selfish man as an unnatural monster. He accused the Church of destroying virtue in the interest of religion; forty years later Warburton in turn condemned the *Characteristics* as a "Scheme of Virtue without Religion."<sup>18</sup>

The fact that this genial theory did not secure literary adoption in Anne's reign is readily explained. Although deism had infected a large proportion of the upper classes, the Queen's zealous protection of the Established Church

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, I, pp. 243, 274.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, I, pp. 73-85; II, pp. 77-84.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, I, pp. 293, 299, 304; II, pp. 36-41, 201.

<sup>18</sup> *A Vindication*, etc., ed. 1740, p. 12.

and the machinery of the law against heresy (1697) deterred most of the recalcitrant spirits from championing a belief that banished Collins in 1713, and threatened the position of Shaftesbury himself.<sup>19</sup> Outwardly the Church was at the height of power.<sup>20</sup> It was also the golden age of ecclesiastical charity, most of it being conducted through the agency of the Religious Societies and preached on the basis which provoked Shaftesbury's contemptuous reference to the "rod and sweetmeat." It is a significant fact that the word "benevolence" had not come into general use, and in spite of the actual relief afforded and the excellent character of men like Robert Nelson who were engaged in the undertaking, there is undoubtedly some truth in Shaftesbury's contention that such charity was a mere bargaining with God. The persuasive used is typified by one of Nelson's own appeals: "God returns to us a hundred-fold, even by open and glaring methods, that which charity hath secretly slid into the hands of the poor. An unexpected inheritance, the determination of a law-suit in our favour, the success of a great adventure, an advantageous match, are sometimes the recompenses of charity in this world."<sup>21</sup> To poetry the *régime* offered at most the possibility of describing with conventional imagery the dread occasion of the final judgment, when rewards and punishments would be dealt out. It was evident, too, that such a *rationale* could not defend its philanthropy against the obnoxious doctrine of the egoists;

<sup>19</sup> See *Regimen*, pp. 369, 371, 384. Shaftesbury's birth was one protection, yet he probably would have suffered but for the interposition of his friend Lord Somers (*Regimen*, pp. 400-2, 420-1).

<sup>20</sup> See F. W. Wilson, *The Importance of the Reign of Queen Anne in Church History*, 1911.

<sup>21</sup> *An Address to Persons of Quality*, etc., London, 1715, pp. 254-5; cf. pp. 102-4.

the Church was, in fact, utilizing the very doctrine it professed to abhor. A vague uneasiness on this account is discernible in some of the essays of Addison and Steele which recommend the cause of the poor; they gradually abandoned the traditional formula, but were too much concerned for their own standing to employ any of Shaftesbury's argument. The only evidence of his theory in any of their publications is to be found in two numbers of the *Spectator* (588, 601) contributed by the dissenter Henry Grove, and published after the Queen's death (1714).

The new conditions ushered in by the accession of George I., however, produced a variety of effects that eventually cleared the way for Shaftesbury's reception. The authority of the Church suddenly declined. The foreign sovereign's indifference to matters of religion, Walpole's conversion of the Church into an instrument of state policy, the Whig suspicion of all ecclesiastical measures fostered by the Tories of the previous reign, and the internal dissensions which had long been brewing in the Church resulted in a collapse of the old hierarchy and its dependent charities,<sup>22</sup> a loss of prestige which the Estab-

<sup>22</sup> The most popular philanthropy during Anne's reign was the Charity School (see *An Account of Charity Schools lately erected in England, Wales, and Ireland*, Ann. Pub. London, 1707; *Tatler*, 138, 261, 372; *British Apollo*, vol. II, 1, 15; *Spectator*, 294, 380, 430; *Guardian*, 105; Robert Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 183 and appendix). These schools were distrusted by the victorious Whig party under George I. as hotbeds of Jacobitism and discountenanced (see *Charity still a Christian Virtue*, a pamphlet of 1719 formerly attributed to Defoe; footnote to a *Poem humbly inscribed to . . . the Oxfordshire Society*, anonymous, 1723). For other failures of the church program, see Overton and Relton, *History of the English Church*, etc., p. 20. On the general decay of the church, see J. H. Overton, *The Evangelical Revival*, etc., Introd.; Sir R. J. Phillimore, *Memoirs of Lord Lyttelton*, I, pp. 354-63; and Addison's *Drummer* (1716).

lished Church has never succeeded in fully restoring. The chief of these causes was the open fight between the deists and the orthodox. When the conflict began to subside, without definite victory for either party, the most tangible results of the fray were a liberty of thought which had been questioned under Anne and a freedom of social reform from the exclusive control of theological dogmatism. Temporarily the distintegration resulted in widespread immorality and a general indifference to questions of philanthropy; but it afforded the necessary transition from the prudential motives of the dogmatists to the safe adoption of Shaftesbury's more liberal views.

The one additional impulse needed for his triumph was furnished by his bitterest opponent, Bernard de Mandeville, whose *Fable of the Bees* (1723) was a coarse attack on the *Characteristics*.<sup>23</sup> While opposing Shaftesbury's theory of benevolence, Mandeville gave the cynical doctrine of Epicurus, Hobbes, and La Rochefoucauld such literal application in his attack on charities and so openly justified the grossness of the time that he offended the self-respect of the better classes.<sup>24</sup> In this way he drove

<sup>23</sup> The earlier edition (1714) is merely the *Grumbling Hive* (1705), a doggerel poem, supplemented by copious notes, and is primarily economic in purpose; the edition of 1723 added *An Essay on Charity Schools and a Search into the Nature of Society*. After a severe reprimand by the Grand Jury of Middlesex, the author published a vindication in the *London Journal* for Aug. 10, 1723, and in 1728 added to the *Fable* a second part. For comments, see *Tea Table* 25 (1724) and *Comedian* 9 (1733). The book went into a sixth English edition in 1729, and a ninth in 1755.

<sup>24</sup> The *Fable* provoked the following replies: John Dennis, *Vice and Luxury Public Mischiefs*, etc. (1724); William Law, *Remarks on the Fable of the Bees* (1724); Richard Fiddes, *A General Treatise of Morality*, etc. (1724); Francis Hutcheson, *Essays* (1725), and *Observations on the Fable of the Bees* (1725-7); Archibald Campbell, *Areteologia* (1728); George Berkeley, *Alciphron*, Dial. II (1732);

to the defense of "benevolence" men of the most divergent views, who found in the *Characteristics* a common rallying-ground. The most important of Shaftesbury's champions among the philosophers was the deist Francis Hutcheson; his influence in the spread of the benevolent theory was second only to that of Shaftesbury himself. It is still more significant, perhaps, that even the orthodox thinkers began slowly to perceive that much of Shaftesbury's ethical system, when "abstracted from the framework of its theology," could be used against Mandeville by the Church as well as by the "free-thinkers." And it will be found that most of the philosophers who afterwards opposed him did so on some ground other than that of his ethics.<sup>25</sup>

An idea of his vogue thereafter is to be had from general testimony of various kinds. The *Characteristics* went into a fourth English edition in 1727, a fifth in 1732, and by 1790 reached the eleventh.<sup>26</sup> It was translated into French and German,<sup>27</sup> and was referred to constantly by English and European writers. The fascination of what Lamb calls the "genteel style" of the author led Goldsmith to observe, in 1759, that Shaftesbury had had "more imitators in Britain than any other writer" he knew; "all faithfully preserving his blemishes, but unhappily not one of his beauties."<sup>28</sup> Montesquieu went so

John Brown, *Essays on the Characteristics, etc.*, Sects. iv, v (1751), and *An Estimate, etc.* (1757), ed. 1758, I, p. 190, II, p. 86. It was attacked also by Rousseau in the *Discours sur l'Inégalité* (1752).

<sup>25</sup> Berkeley is a conspicuous exception (see *Alciphron*, Dial. III).

<sup>26</sup> J. M. Robertson, *op. cit.*, I, p. xiv.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.* See also T. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>28</sup> "An Account of the Augustan Age in England," *The Bee*. Compare J. Leland, *View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, London, 1754, I, p. 71. In ridicule Berkeley rewrote some of the *Moralists* in blank verse (*Alciphron*, Dial. v, 22).

far as to call him one of the four great poets of the world.<sup>29</sup> Even Warburton, who was moved to righteous indignation by the theology of the *Characteristics*, could not entirely withhold his praise: "In his writings he hath shown how largely he had imbibed the deep sense, and how naturally he could copy the gracious manner of Plato."<sup>30</sup> Bishop Hurd was of the opinion that one of the only three dialogues in English that deserved commendation was the *Moralists* of Lord Shaftesbury.<sup>31</sup> John Byrom's *Enthusiasm* (1752) gives a more specific reason for his popularity:

The Mercer, Tailor, Bookseller, grows rich,  
Because fine clothes, fine Writings can bewitch.  
A Cicero, a Shaftesbury, a Bayle—  
How quickly would they diminish in their Sale!  
Four-fifths of all their Beauties who would heed,  
Had they not keen *Enthusiasts* to read?

The Preface to the edition of 1733 asserts triumphantly, "All the best judges are agreed that we never had any work in the English language so beautiful, so delightful, and so instructive as these *Characteristics*." Through Warburton we have Pope's testimony that "to his knowledge the *Characteristics* had done more harm to revealed religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together."<sup>32</sup> Herder, one of Shaftesbury's devoted followers, thinking of the æsthetic system of ethics proposed

<sup>29</sup> *Pensées Diverses*, Œuv. Comp., Paris, 1838, p. 626.

<sup>30</sup> Dedication of *The Divine Legation* (1738). Cited by T. Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>31</sup> *Moral and Political Dialogues*, Preface. Quoted by J. Warton, *Essay on Pope*, London, 1806, II, p. 198. Note also Hurd's *Dialogues on the Uses of Foreign Travel . . . Considered as a Part of an English Gentleman's Education: between Lord Shaftesbury and Mr. Locke*, etc., London, 1764.

<sup>32</sup> Chalmers's *Biog. Dict.*, art. John Brown.

by him, declared in 1794 that this "virtuoso of humanity" had contributed much to the philosophy of Leibnitz, Diderot, Lessing, and Mendelssohn, and indeed had "exercised a marked influence upon the best heads of the century, upon men who with resolute honesty concerned themselves with the True, the Beautiful, and the Good."<sup>33</sup> Shaftesbury's countryman, John Armstrong, who was not so friendly to his philosophy, gave similar, but less elegant, testimony by admitting in *Taste* (1753) that "Ashley turned more solid heads than one." It is safe to assert that, with the possible exception of John Locke, Shaftesbury was more generally known in the mid-century than any other English philosopher.

## II

These various conditions indicate why Shaftesbury's vogue in popular literature was delayed until the closing years of George I.'s reign and then suddenly became general.

In the earlier period I have already noted a faint reflection of his influence on Henry Grove's essays in the *Spectator*; but it is a very general resemblance and cautiously avoids any possibility of offense to the Church. Apparently the first actual literary follower of Shaftesbury was the obscure poet Henry Needler (1690-1718). In a thin volume of verse and prose, original date of publication unknown, there is a letter of December 3, 1711, in which he thanks a correspondent for a copy of the *Characteristics* (published in that year). As a token of

<sup>33</sup> *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, Brief 33. See also Brief 32; *Fragmente, Zweite Sammlung*, "Von der griechischen Litteratur in Deutschland;" and *Adrastea*, I, 14: "Shaftesburi, Geist und Frohsinn."

his appreciation, he attempted a prose imitation of Shaftesbury's apostrophe to nature in the *Moralists*, and used the same material for a *Poem in blank verse, proving the Being of a God from the Works of Creation. And some brief Remarks on the Folly of Discontent*. These puerile performances assemble all the propositions of Natural Religion: the Deity reveals himself through his works; the revelation of his character is made clear to his creatures, who are endowed with an all-sufficient reason; and the only legitimate attitude of man is the assurance that this scheme of nature is unexceptionable. Other resemblances to Shaftesbury are evident in Needler's prose essay *On the Beauty of the Universe* and his poems *On the True Cause of Natural Effects* and *A Vernal Hymn in Praise of the Creator*. I suspect Needler's fate served for a time to deter further experiments of the kind; there seems to be no trace of his first edition; he committed suicide, and the editor of the second edition was much concerned to vindicate the "extreme piety" of the poet. Although his entire work is feeble and makes relatively little of Shaftesbury except as to theology, it is important as an index. In spite of the danger which almost certainly attended the adoption of deism, he could not resist the appeal of Shaftesbury's poetical treatment of nature. At the time of the second edition (1728), such ideas were no longer contraband, and poetry was already flooded with a more or less scientific study of universal harmony. Needler's explicit reference of these views to Shaftesbury is in itself a good reason for supposing that, although some of the later poets do not acknowledge the indebtedness, the entire school derived much of its inspiration from the same source. It is probable, too, that the following publisher's Advertisement included in the 1728 edition of Needler stimulated productivity: "The Essay on the



Beauty of the Universe, though very just and rational, is but a sketch (as Mr. Needler himself owns) . . . I wish it may incite some able hand to treat more amply so useful and entertaining a Subject."

Shaftesbury's popularity, however, was to depend primarily on his ethical teaching, for which this theology served merely as a poetical background. Popular writers, like the philosophers, turned to him in the late twenties as a refuge from the nightmare occasioned by Mandeville's doctrine, which in view of contemporary selfishness was disconcertingly plausible, and therefore all the more distressing to national pride. A good general impression of the popular attitude is afforded by extracts from two poems that came somewhat late in the movement. In *Honour, a Poem* (1743), which denounces various pests of society, John Brown bestows chief place upon Hobbes and Mandeville:

Errour in vain attempts the foul disguise  
Still tasted in the bitter wave of vice;  
Drawn from the springs of Falsehood all confess  
Each baneful drop that poisons happiness;  
Gordon's thin shallows, Tindale's muddy page,  
And Morgan's gall, and Woolston's furious rage;  
Th' envenom'd stream that flows from Toland's quill,  
And the rank dregs of Hobbes and Mandeville.  
Detested names! yet sentenc'd ne'er to die;  
Snatch'd from oblivion's grave by infamy.<sup>1</sup>

The author adds, in a footnote to the passage, "The reader who is acquainted with the writings of these gentlemen will probably observe a kind of climax in this place; ascending from those who attempt to destroy the several

<sup>1</sup> Similar attacks on the egoists are contained in James Bramston's *The Man of Taste* (1733); David Mallet's *Tyburn: To the Marine Society* (1762); Samuel Wesley, Jr.'s *On Mr. Hobbes*; William Dobson's *Translation of Anti-Lucretius, Of God and Nature* (1757).

fences of virtue, to the wild boars of the wood that root it up." Shaftesbury, on the other hand, was hailed as the champion of moral rule. In a poem of 1735, referring to Newton's discoveries, is the following tribute by William Melmoth: <sup>2</sup>

Order *without* us, what imports it seen,  
 If all is restless anarchy *within*?  
 Fired with this thought great Ashley, gen'rous sage,  
 Plan'd [*sic*] in sweet leisure his instructive page.  
 Not orbs he weighs, but marks with happier skill  
 The scope of *action* and the poise of *will*;  
 In fair proportion here described we trace  
 Each *mental* beauty, and each moral grace,  
 Each useful passion taught its tone designed  
 In the nice concord of a well tun'd mind.  
 Does mean self-love contract each social aim?  
 Here publick transports shall thy soul inflame,  
 Virtue and Deity supremely fair,  
 Too oft delineated with looks severe,  
 Resume their native smiles and graces here.

The moral question at issue between these two systems of philosophy—the egoistic and the benevolent—became soon after the publication of the *Fable* the most absorbing topic of public discussion. Apparently no poet had the courage to support Mandeville's entire theory.<sup>3</sup> Naturally Shaftesbury's most ardent defenders were deists who accepted the doctrine of the *Characteristics* entire. It was therefore due principally to the deists that "benevolence" became the most fashionable topic of poetry; but their view gradually spread. The result was not merely a re-

<sup>2</sup> *Of Active and Retired Life, an Epistle to Henry Coventry, Esq.* (1735).

<sup>3</sup> Lord Paget's *An Essay on Human Life* (1734), which according to Horace Walpole was written in imitation of Pope, is probably to be excepted; there is one passage which adopts Mandeville's view in explicit terms. Later, however, the author apparently contradicts himself.

vival of social and literary interest in philanthropy, and a revulsion from the moral coarseness of the time, but the replacing of the old prudential argument by a more disinterested motive that lent itself to the sentimental belief in natural goodness. The change meant a break with theological dogma and a definite step towards the naturalism of Rousseau.

In poetry the beginning of this ethical movement is to be assigned definitely to James Thomson. By adopting the theory of the social affections, he became the first important humanitarian poet in English. When the original edition of *Winter* appeared (1726), Thomson was not sufficiently in touch with English social problems to deal with them; his first utterance on the subject is in *Summer* (1727), and it is stated in the most general terms. After upbraiding the cruelty of those who neglect charitable offices, he adds:

But to the generous still-improving mind,  
That gives the hopeless heart to sing for joy,  
Diffusing kind beneficence around,  
Boastless, as now descends the silent dew—  
To him the long review of ordered life  
Is inward rapture only to be felt. (1641-6)

Simple, and even commonplace, as this passage is, it sounds a new note in English poetry. From this time forward Thomson himself was continually pleading, not merely for the spirit of benevolence, but for every special humane movement of his day. Most of such comment in the *Seasons* <sup>4</sup> is in passages supplementary to the original content

<sup>4</sup> The chief passages are: *Spring*, 867-962 (904-62 added 1738); *Summer*, 1013-25, 1630-46; *Autumn*, 95-150, 169-76, 350-9, 1020-9; *Winter*, 276-388, 1050-69. Some of these are discussed briefly by Léon Morel, *James Thomson, sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris, 1895, p. 388. See also *To the Memory of . . . Talbot*, 117-29, 270-82, 352-62; *Liberty*, III, 32-70, IV, 322-43, 479-573, 746-62, 1157-76, V, 235-61,

of the poems,<sup>5</sup> the chief additions being made to *Winter*: the first edition, the second, and the final contain, respectively, 405, 781, and 1069 lines, and the increase is due principally to the insertion of humanitarian passages. Among the special philanthropies he encouraged in the *Seasons* and elsewhere are Oglethorpe's prison reforms,<sup>6</sup> the founding of Georgia for debtors,<sup>7</sup> and the erection of the Foundling Hospital.<sup>8</sup> In no poet before Thomson, and in few poets since, have social duties held so large a place in comparison with other literary interests; moreover, in no popular writing had the cause of social reform been argued on the basis adopted by him.

Thomson was regarded by Voltaire<sup>9</sup> as "a true philosophical poet," and that he drew his inspiration largely from the *Characteristics* was recognized by Herder,<sup>10</sup> whose own reproduction of Shaftesbury's ideas in both prose<sup>11</sup> and verse<sup>12</sup> establishes his competency as a critic in the matter. One of Thomson's recent biographers, however, is disturbed by what he considers a modern tendency to associate the poet with the philosophers. "To represent him as primarily a 'philosophical poet' is," says G. C. Macaulay,<sup>13</sup> "a strange aberration of criticism which has

277-303, 471-83, 638-66; *Castle of Indolence*, Canto II, stanzas lxxiv, lxxv (Aldine ed., 2 vols., 1897).

<sup>5</sup> For the various texts, see O. Zippel, ed. *Seasons*, Berlin, 1908.

<sup>6</sup> *Winter*, 359-88.

<sup>7</sup> *Liberty*, Part V, 638-46.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, 471-83, 647-66.

<sup>9</sup> From Voltaire's letter to Lyttelton, May 17, 1750. Cf. R. J. Phillimore, *op. cit.*, I, p. 323.

<sup>10</sup> *Adrastea*, I, 14: "Shaftesburi, Geist und Frohsinn." Cited by T. Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>11</sup> *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, Brief 32.

<sup>12</sup> *Naturhymnus von Shaftesburi* (1800).

<sup>13</sup> *James Thomson* (English Men of Letters), p. 96. But see W. J. Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, v, pp. 305-12; Morel, *op. cit.*, Ch. VI, Sect. iv.

been reserved for our own times." The truth is, it would be a strange oversight in criticism not to do so. If in a period when most of the literature was didactic there is any poet more frankly committed to philosophy than Mark Akenside, it is James Thomson. In a juvenile lay he laments his philosophic inability:

Ah! my loved God! in vain a tender youth  
Unskilled in arts of deep philosophy,  
Attempts to search the bulky mass of matter,  
To trace the rules of motion; and pursue  
The phantom Time, too subtle for his grasp.<sup>14</sup>

In a later poem he indicates that he has supplied the deficiency:

With thee, serene Philosophy, with thee,  
And thy bright garland, let me crown my song!  
Effusive source of evidence and truth!

And after explaining the nature of his philosophical conclusions, he adds:

Tutored by thee, hence poetry exalts  
Her voice to ages; and informs the page  
With music, image, sentiment, and thought,  
Never to die; the treasure of mankind,  
Their highest honour, and their truest joy.<sup>15</sup>

There are few pages in his poems which will not furnish further evidence, including the mention and reproduction of various philosophers, ancient and modern. What Macaulay probably meant is that Thomson does not expound any particular system of philosophy in dry detail, that he is not a mere versifying philosopher. This statement, however, is true only in the sense that his philosophy is not

<sup>14</sup> *Fragment of a Poem on the Works and Wonders of Almighty Power*. Pub. in *Plain Dealer*, 46.

<sup>15</sup> See entire passage, *Summer*, 1730-1805.

collected in one continuous passage, but is relieved and illustrated by many devices of poetic art; the entire *corpus* of his verse is pervaded by philosophic assumptions frequently stated and maintained with as great consistence as one finds in most speculation of the period.<sup>16</sup>

That Thomson accepted the theology of deism is established by the testimony of his poetry and his contemporaries. Macaulay cited the latter class of evidence, but made little account of the former. Negatively, Thomson's deism is indicated by the fact that, after he came to England, he expressed no belief in Christ or in revelation—an omission of some consequence when we recall that the religious controversy was then intense, that he was constantly dealing with questions immediately related to theological belief, and that in his early life he had written poems on the orthodox pattern. Positively, it is indicated by his insistence on the sufficiency of reason.<sup>17</sup> His friend Lord Lyttelton lamented his heresy and hoped that he would retract it publicly; but Lyttelton's only satisfaction was that Thomson on his death-bed made a vague profession of Christianity to one or two personal friends.<sup>18</sup> To shield the poet's reputation after his death, Lyttelton omitted from the collected edition of Thomson's work the *Hymn* which concludes the *Seasons*; but Murdoch reinstated it, claiming that "the theology of it, allowance being made

<sup>16</sup> Pope's contradictions are notorious. Thomson vacillates between pantheism and a belief in the personality of God (Morel, *op. cit.*, pp. 397-9); the same inconsistency runs throughout Shaftesbury's philosophy. Their pantheism is a matter largely of poetic phrasing; but the orthodox found in these deistic expressions grounds for identifying deists and atheists.

<sup>17</sup> There is more than a hint of his theology in *Liberty*, Part iv, 561-73.

<sup>18</sup> Lyttelton's Letter to Doddridge, R. J. Phillimore, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 306-8, 407-9. See also Morel, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-7, 359-60.

for poetical expression, is orthodox." On this particular point Lyttelton's judgment was obviously sound; but this one omission would have had slight effect, for the deistic presupposition is at the root of all Thomson's verse.

It is highly probable, too, that the poet took his theology, as Needler did, directly from Shaftesbury. The fundamental principle he might have had from various sources, for it was by this time a commonplace. The literature and coffee-house discussions which carried on the "learned scuffle," during the reign of George I., however, were strictly polemical and usually very coarse. Shaftesbury had, on the other hand, quietly assumed the doctrine, and as a theologian had devoted his main energy to giving it poetic application in his impassioned treatment of the Deity and Nature. An equally æsthetic and insidious presentation is not to be found in any of the argumentative deists who followed him. Thomson's theology is of the same unobtrusive, artistic kind. The similarity between the nature-worship in the *Seasons* and in the *Characteristics*, especially between the *Hymn* and the apostrophe in the *Moralists*, is too obvious to require more than a statement; but it will become still more impressive if these two pieces are studied in connection with Herder's *Naturhymnus von Shaftesburi* (1800). The indebtedness is particularly evident in Thomson's virtual identification of God and Nature in such passages as the following which occur frequently:

Hail, Source of Beings, Universal Soul  
Of heaven and earth! Essential Presence, hail! <sup>19</sup>

O Nature! all-sufficient! over all! <sup>20</sup>

These, as they change, Almighty Father, these  
Are but the varied God. The rolling year  
Is full of Thee. <sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Spring*, 556 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Autumn*, 1351.

<sup>21</sup> *Hymn*.

The dependence upon the *Characteristics* manifests itself still more clearly in passages like the following from *Summer*, which repeats Shaftesbury's protest against the short-sighted vanity of man in questioning the perfect ends of nature:

Let no presuming impious railer tax  
Creative Wisdom, as if aught was formed  
In vain, or not for admirable ends.<sup>22</sup>

The most connected discourse in the manner of the *Characteristics* is the treatment of the thesis already noted in the study of Shaftesbury—that the physical and moral world are but two expressions of the same cosmic order. Thomson would study with his friends the world of physical nature—

Its life, its laws, its progress, and its end,

and adds in continuation:

Then would we try to scan the moral world,  
Which, though to us it seems embroiled, moves on  
In high order; fitted and impelled  
By wisdom's firmest hand, and issuing all  
In general good.<sup>23</sup>

This agreement in theology, however, has for the present purpose only the secondary importance of confirming Thomson's debt to the *Characteristics* for his system of morality. On this purely ethical ground the relation between the two can hardly be questioned, although it has been disregarded by such a thorough student at Morel.<sup>24</sup> The main business of Thomson as well as Shaftesbury was

<sup>22</sup> Ll. 318-20.

<sup>23</sup> *Winter*, 572-616.

<sup>24</sup> There is a slight reference to Shaftesbury and Thomson's tribute to him, p. 399, and note. Grudzinski, in the introduction to his inaugural dissertation (*op. cit.*, pp. 7-8), adopts Herder's view.



to make his entire speculation subservient to virtuous practice: in each case theology was important only as a starting-point for ethics. In his statement of man's moral obligations the poet's indebtedness to the philosopher would be sufficiently clear from internal evidence; it is, moreover, explicitly acknowledged by Thomson. In a long catalogue of illustrious philosophers, statesmen, and poets of England, Shaftesbury is the only one commended for his moral teaching:

The generous Ashley, thine, the friend of man;  
Who scanned his nature with a brother's eye,  
His weakness prompt to shade, to raise his aim,  
To touch the finer movements of the mind,  
And with the moral beauty charm the heart.<sup>25</sup>

The end of all Shaftesbury's theology and ethics is the "moral beauty" which entitles man "to be justly styled the friend of mankind"; the moral purpose which invigorates and unifies all of Thomson's poetry is the same universal benevolence. In strict accord with Shaftesbury's theory of natural virtue, Thomson urges as the sole persuasive of all humanitarian conduct the "moral beauty" of goodness. He makes even slighter concession to the orthodox notion of future reward and punishment than Shaftesbury does; the conclusion of *Winter*, altered as it now stands, allows a life of bliss to compensate the evils endured by the virtuous in this world, but Thomson makes no attempt to enforce morality by reference to a future life. The orthodox poets of a slightly earlier period, and a few in his time, recommend social duties by depicting the awful scenes of the Judgment Day, when the charitable will be given eternal happiness with God, and the uncharitable will be consigned to everlasting fire;

<sup>25</sup> *Summer*, 1550-5.

Thomson regularly proposes as the ultimate reward of generous aid the "inward rapture only to be felt." His belief in the sufficiency of virtue is contained in this prayer:—

Father of light and life! thou Good Supreme!  
O teach me what is good! teach me thyself!  
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,  
From every low pursuit; and feed my soul  
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure,  
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss! <sup>28</sup>

It may be objected that the present argument exaggerates the evidence of internal resemblance and of Thomson's own statement of discipleship by attributing to Shaftesbury's suggestion many ideas that are commonplaces in philosophy and poetry. The very fact that they are commonplaces is due largely to these two writers. Before Thomson's time there is no popular writer who exhibits his system in its entirety or even the full statement of his moral doctrine. It is equally true that he himself could have borrowed his main assumptions *in toto* only from Shaftesbury. His theology he might have had from anywhere, but in a very dessicated form. Some details of his ethics he might have had from early philosophers. But the pagan moralists whom he mentions are the very writers whose doctrines inform the *Characteristics*; and among Shaftesbury's successors the only moral philosopher who could have contributed directly to Thomson's special view of benevolence was Francis Hutcheson, who began his defense of the *Characteristics* the year Thomson came to London, and whose influence, if proved, would be merely additional. The argument of relation between Shaftesbury and Thomson is further confirmed by their agreement

<sup>28</sup> *Winter*, 217-22.

on matters extraneous to the subject of this study—including their critical utterances on literature, politics, and the connection between the arts and social progress. In the *Advice to an Author*, an essay recommended to struggling writers by its eloquent plea for literary patronage, Shaftesbury urges particularly the employment of blank verse and the conversion of all poetry into a medium for moral instruction. Thomson's conformity with these views and the defence of his practice, set forth in the prose dedications and the poetry itself, may be accidental; at any rate, the coincidence adds another link to the chain of association. Possibly a greater significance attaches to the fact that Thomson's defense of the Whigs, his unhappy efforts to trace the genesis and progress of society, his treatment of the connection between culture and freedom, and various other enthusiastic ideas of *Liberty* are faithful in spirit to the earlier statements of the more practical Whig philosopher.<sup>27</sup> If we take into account at one view this general agreement on the incidental matters discussed by the two writers, the widespread interest in the Shaftesbury-Mandeville dispute, Thomson's evident imitation of Shaftesbury's theological and ethical doctrine, and his own acknowledgment of his indebtedness, there is no reason for rejecting Herder's opinion or for denying to Shaftesbury's influence the moral system which underlies all of Thomson's benevolent poetry. To do so would be to assume that the poet Thomson evolved a theory of ethics which the philosophers themselves, Hutcheson and others, were copying from Shaftesbury.

<sup>27</sup> The following passages in the *Characteristics* reflect the author's political views: I, pp. 73, 141-6, 153-5; II, pp. 45-6. For further evidence see *Regimen*, Letter to Thomas Stringer, Feb. 15, 1695-6, p. 300; to Sir Rowland Gwinn, Jan. 23, 1704, pp. 318-20; to Mr. Van Twedde, Jan. 17, 1705-6, pp. 347-352; to Tiresias, Nov. 29, 1706, pp. 367-8.

This is a matter of the first importance in defining the effect of the *Characteristics* upon popular literature. This relation once admitted, it follows that "the founder of the benevolent school of philosophy" exerted through the *Seasons* an indirect influence upon many other poets, great and small, who were immediately fired by the reception of Thomson, but did not always refer their ideas to Shaftesbury as the original source. It was due largely to Thomson's example that "benevolence" and "good-nature" stamped themselves on all English literature. In a biography prefixed to the 1740 edition of his poems, Thomas Murdoch explains the poet's popularity on two grounds: "In a short time the applause became unanimous; everyone wondering how so many pictures, and pictures so familiar, should have moved them but faintly to what they felt in his descriptions. His digressions, too, the overflowings of a tender benevolent heart, charmed the reader no less; leaving him in doubt, whether he should more admire the Poet or love the Man." Lord Lyttelton referred to Thomson as one who taught "fair Virtue's purest laws,"<sup>28</sup> and paid a compliment to his "fine and delicate sentiments of a most tender and benevolent heart."<sup>29</sup> Shiels's *Musidorus* (1748)<sup>30</sup> commended Thomson's humanity. David Mallet addressed him as a benefactor who "dared to embrace the general welfare of thy kind."<sup>31</sup> Similar praise is to be found in Shenstone's *Verses Written towards the close of 1748*, *Elegy* xiv, xxiii, and *Pastoral Ode to Richard Lyttelton*; Richard Savage's *Of Public*

<sup>28</sup> Prologue to *Coriolanus* (1749).

<sup>29</sup> *Dialogues of the Dead*, xiv.

<sup>30</sup> *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Mr. James Thomson*, London, 1748. Published anonymously; for authorship of Shiels, see Morel, *op. cit.*, p. 379, note.

<sup>31</sup> *To Mr. Thomson* (on the publication of the second edition of *Winter*), 1726. There were four editions of *Winter* in this year.

*Spirit*; Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe's *To Mr. Thomson*; Joseph Giles's *The Leasowes*; Joseph Mitchell's *To Mr. Thomson*; and the anonymous *On Beneficence*.<sup>32</sup> The encouragement of the poetasters to imitate Thomson's benevolent writing and also to capitalize his example is seen in the following passage from James Ralph's Preface to a volume of poetry (1729) including *Night*, which was written in imitation of Thomson's *Winter*: "Poetry is at once intended for our delight, and instruction; but a vicious fancy of amusing the world with trifles in lieu of such subjects as are in themselves truly noble and sublime, has of late been too much indulg'd; for which reason, I hope, 'twill be equally needless, to make any excuse for my choice of so grave a subject, or use any persuasives to influence its success; especially if the dress it appears in should prove any way becoming to its dignity; and 'tis consider'd with what applause Mr. Thomson's admirable poems were generally received by the favorers of learning and good sense; an undeniable argument, that if the 'Muse' is really the inspirer, the world, even to a serious author, will not be wholly ungrateful."<sup>33</sup>

Of Mark Akenside's direct indebtedness to the *Characteristics* there is abundant evidence. He himself speaks of Shaftesbury as "the noble restorer of ancient philosophy."<sup>34</sup> According to Gray, *The Pleasures of the Imagi-*

<sup>32</sup> Second ed., London, 1764.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Thomson's Preface to the second, third, and fourth editions of *Winter*, Aldine ed., I, pp. cxi-cxvi.

<sup>34</sup> Author's note on *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, Bk. I, l. 374 ("Truth and Good are one"): he praises Hutcheson for the same doctrine. In note on Bk. III, l. 18, he connects Shaftesbury with Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, and declares that in Shaftesbury "the stoical doctrine is embellished with all the elegance and grace of Plato." See also note on Bk. II, l. 325. For the suggestions of another kind derived from Addison, see Preface.

nation (1744) is "too much infected with the Hutchison jargon."<sup>35</sup> Warburton calls Akenside "a follower of Ld. Shaftesbury."<sup>36</sup> John Gilbert Cooper regarded Shaftesbury's doctrine as best reproduced by Hutcheson and Akenside.<sup>37</sup> The *Pleasures of the Imagination* versifies not only the incidental theology of the *Characteristics*, but the attacks on superstition and the defense of ridicule as a corrective in all religious discussion.<sup>38</sup> It is least poetic in those parts which discuss the harmony of the physical universe discovered by Newton; Akenside attempts to illustrate the general truth by minute details, and turns out a product frequently neither scientific nor poetic. Thomson had exhibited the same fault, but less extensively. Although Akenside devotes much more of his time to these dry details than to the moral ideas and practical lessons arising from his system of nature, there are some passages which reproduce very accurately Shaftesbury's theory of innate benevolence. In the following passage Akenside takes issue with the cynicism of Hobbes and Mandeville:

Dost thou aspire to judge between the Lord  
Of Nature and His works? To lift thy voice  
Against the sovereign order He decreed,  
All good and lovely? To blaspheme the bonds  
Of tenderness innate and social love,  
Holiest of things! by which the general orb  
Of being, as by adamantine links,  
Was drawn to perfect union and sustain'd  
From everlasting? Hast thou felt the pangs

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<sup>35</sup> *Letters*, ed. D. C. Tovey, 3 vols., London, 1900, I, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> *Remarks on Several Occasional Observations*, etc.

<sup>37</sup> Author's note on *The Power of Harmony*.

<sup>38</sup> This view of Shaftesbury's was especially irritating to the orthodox, and was constantly attacked by them. For a similar protest in verse, see W. Whitehead, *On Ridicule* (1743).

Of softening sorrow, of indignant zeal  
 So grievous to the soul, as thence to wish  
 The ties of Nature broken from thy frame;  
 That so thy selfish, unrelenting heart  
 Might cease to mourn its lot, no longer then  
 The wretched heir of evils not its own?  
 O fair benevolence of generous minds!  
 O man by Nature form'd for all mankind!<sup>39</sup>

In another passage he is equally pointed in his attack on the assertion of the egoists that all pity is to be resolved into selfishness. Mandeville had illustrated the point by saying that if a man rescues a baby from falling into the fire, he acts, not out of compassion for the baby, but out of the selfish desire to save himself from an unpleasant feeling. Akenside's counter illustration is as follows:

Ask the crowd  
 Which flies impatient from the village walk  
 To climb the neighboring cliffs, when far below  
 The cruel winds have hurl'd upon the coast  
 Some helpless bark; while sacred Pity melts  
 The general eye, or Terror's icy hand  
 Smites, every mother closer to her breast  
 Catches her child, and, pointing where the waves  
 Foam through the shatter'd vessel, shrieks aloud  
 As one poor wretch that spreads his piteous arms,  
 For succour, swallow'd by the roaring surge,  
 As now another, dash'd against the rock,  
 Drops lifeless down: O! deemst thou indeed  
 No kind endearment here by Nature given  
 To mutual terror and compassion's tears?  
 No sweetly melting softness which attracts,  
 O'er all that edge of pain, the social powers  
 To this their proper action and their end?<sup>40</sup>

The closest rendering of Shaftesbury's theory is found in *Concord* (1751), a poem written by his nephew James

<sup>39</sup> Bk. II, 246-62.

<sup>40</sup> Revised ed., 1765, Bk. II, 624-42.

Harris.<sup>41</sup> The general resemblance is indicated by the opening lines:

The deeds of discord, or in prose or rhyme,  
 Let others tell. 'Tis mine (the better theme)  
 Concord to sing; and thus begins the song:  
 Congenial things to things congenial tend:  
 So rivulets their little waters join  
 To form one river's greater stream: so haste  
 The rivers, from their different climes, to meet,  
 And kindly mix, in the vast ocean's bed;  
 To fires ethereal, each terrestrial blaze,  
 Such elemental Concord. Yet not here  
 Confin'd the sacred sympathy, but wide  
 Thro' plant and animal diffusely spread.  
 How many myriads of the grassy blade  
 Assemble, to create one verdant plain?  
 How many cedars' towering heights conspire,  
 Thy tops, O cloud-capt Lebanon! to deck?  
 Life-animal still more conspicuous gives  
 Her fair example. Here the social tie  
 We trace, ascending from th' ignoble swarms  
 Of insects, up to flocks and grazing herds;  
 Thence to the polities of bees and ants,  
 And honest beavers, bound by friendly league  
 Of mutual help and interest. Cruel man!  
 For love of gain, to persecute, to kill,  
 This gentle, social, and ingenious race,  
 That never did you wrong. But stop, my Muse,  
 Stop this sad song, nor deviate to recount  
 Man's more inhuman deeds; for man too feels  
 Benign affection, nor dares disobey,  
 Tho' oft reluctant, Nature's mighty voice,  
 That summons all to harmony and love.  
 Else would to Nature's Author foul impute  
 Of negligence accrue, while baser things

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<sup>41</sup> Not included in the ed. of Harris's works by his son, but assigned to him in *The Poetical Calendar*, F. Fawkes and W. Woty, London, 1763, XII, pp. 53-9. Johnson considered Harris "a prig, and a bad prig" (Boswell, ed. Morley, III, p. 206). In 1744 he published *Three Treatises, the first concerning Art, the second concerning Music, Painting, and Poetry, the third concerning Happiness*; the first of these, a dialogue, is dedicated to Shaftesbury.



He knits in holy friendship, thus to leave  
His chief and last work void of sweet attract,  
And tendence to its fellow.

The identity of the Good and Beautiful, one of the chief doctrines of the *Characteristics*, is stated thus:

And as the tuneful string spontaneous sounds  
In answer to his kindred note; so he  
The secret harmony within him feels,  
When aught of beauty offers. This the joy,  
While verdant plains and grazing herds we view,  
Or ocean's mighty vastness; or the stars,  
In midnight silence as along they roll.  
Hence too the rapture, while the harmonious bard  
Attunes his vocal song; and hence the joy,  
While what the sculptor graves, the painter paints,  
And all the pleasing mimickries of art  
Strike our accordant minds. Yet chief by far,  
Chief is man's joy, when, mixt with human kind,  
He feels affection melt the social heart;  
Feels friendship, love, and all the charities  
Of father, son, and brother. Here the pure  
Sincere congenial, free from all alloy,  
With bliss he recognizes. For to man  
What dearer is than man? Say you, who prove  
The kindly call, the social sympathy,  
What but this call, this social sympathy,  
Tempers to standard due the vain exult  
Of prosperous fortune? What but this refines  
Soft pity's pain, and sweetens every care,  
Each friendly care we feel for human kind?

The similar purport of *The Power of Harmony, In Two Books* (1745), by John Gilbert Cooper, one of the chief "benevolists," is indicated sufficiently by the concluding statement of the Design prefixed to the poem: "From what has been premised, it would be needless to explain the comprehensive meaning of the word harmony. For an explanation or a proof of the relation of the imitative arts to moral philosophy, the reader is referred to the dialogues of Plato, and the other philosophers of the academic school;

to lord Shaftesbury and Hutchison, their great disciples among the moderns." The authority of Shaftesbury is avowed also by the minor poet Andrews in *To the Late Lord Shaftesbury's Ghost*, printed as a conclusion to *Eidyllia* (1757) and the anonymous poems *An Ode on Benevolence* (1753) and *An Essay on Happiness, In Four Books* (1762).

The poetry so far cited, ranging in time from 1726 to 1762, represents a definite "school." Of the distinctive characteristics which these writers imitated from Shaftesbury the most common are a quasi-scientific theology and a moral system ending in the doctrine of universal benevolence. That many other writers, who do not state their authority, fell under the same influence would naturally follow from the evidence of Shaftesbury's popularity furnished by these poets and by the testimony of other writers cited in connection with various matters throughout this study. In view of such a vogue, it is clearly legitimate to refer to the same source contemporary poems exhibiting with minute precision the same characteristics. Whether they spring directly from Shaftesbury or his imitators is of small concern. Undoubtedly most of them were stimulated by Thomson's *Seasons*. The very titles of some indicate the nature of their contents: Henry Baker's *The Universe* (1727), Henry Brooke's *Universal Beauty* (1728, 1735),<sup>42</sup> Soame Jenyns's *An Essay on Virtue* (1734), and the anonymous

<sup>42</sup> According to the *Cambridge Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, vol. ix, p. 207, Brooke's poem is "by no means atheistic or even deistic"; but it has the characteristics of this school of deistic literature from Needler's *Essay on the Beauty of the Universe* to Pope's *Essay on Man*, to which Brooke refers, Bk. v, 60. Compare his pseudo-science with that of Shaftesbury, Thomson, and Akenside. Note also Bk. v, 1-32. Did the Advertisement attached to Needler's poem influence Brooke? (See *supra*, pp. 278-9.)

*Order* (1737), *Essay on Happiness* (1737), *On Beneficence* (1740), *Nature, A Poem* (1747), and *Poetic Essays on Nature, Men and Morals* (1750). There is further evidence of imitation in David Mallet's *The Excursion* (1728) and William Hamilton's *Contemplation, or The Triumph of Love* (1747). The allegiance to Hutcheson is acknowledged by Mrs. Constantia Grierson in a poem *To the Honourable Mrs. Percival* and by the anonymous author of *On Reading Hutchison*.<sup>43</sup>

Of this group, only two pieces call for discussion. Henry Baker's *The Universe* (1727), one of the first minor poems to indicate the movement, has intimations of both Shaftesbury and Needler. Moreover, crude as the following passage is, it looks forward to the *Essay on Man*:

Alas! what's *Man* thus insolent and vain?  
One single link of Nature's mighty chain.  
Each hated toad, each crawling worm we see,  
Is needful to the Whole no less than he.

The passage immediately succeeding gives further evidence of relation to Shaftesbury and raises a point so far purposely ignored in the discussion of his philosophy and that of his imitators.

Calmly consider wherefore gracious Heav'n  
To all these Creatures has existence giv'n.  
Eternal Goodness certainly design'd,  
That ev'ry one, according to its kind,  
Should happiness enjoy:—for God, all-just,  
Could ne'er intend His creatures to be curs'd.  
When life He gave, He meant that life should be  
A state productive of felicity.  
And, though to kill there may be some pretence,  
When raging hunger bids, or self-defence;  
No cause beside can justify the deed.  
'Tis murder if not urg'd by real need.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ladies' Mag.*, iv, p. 1 (1753).

If the same Pow'r did ev'ry being give,  
 If all for happiness did life receive,  
 Then ev'ry thing has equal right to live.  
 And how dares man, who's but himself a breath,  
 Destroy through wantonness, and sport with Death!

That this particular form of humanity is an integral part of Shaftesbury's scheme is self-evident, for the social affections must of necessity include the lower animals as a part of universal nature. He specifically makes this application in opposition to Des Cartes,<sup>44</sup> and Needler develops the doctrine at some length.<sup>45</sup> Like all of Shaftesbury's program, this idea came largely from the seventeenth-century study of Greek philosophy. It is found repeatedly in the Cambridge Platonists,<sup>46</sup> who were indebted for it chiefly to the Pythagoreans.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the elaboration and widespread diffusion of it in eighteenth-century literature were due to so many contributory influences<sup>48</sup> besides Natural Religion that an adequate examination of it would require more space than can be given here. The movement was undoubtedly stimulated by de-

<sup>44</sup> *Characteristics*, II, p. 287. Cf. 120-1, 176, 315-6 and I, pp. 331-2.

<sup>45</sup> Letter to Mr. D., Dec. 3, 1711, *Works*, p. 216.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Cudworth, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 61, 357, III, pp. 307-8, 449-53, 469; Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, Bk. II, Ch. xii; *Divine Dialogues*, Dial. II, Sect. xi, Dial. III, Sects. iii, xxx. J. Maxwell, the translator of Cumberland's *De Legibus Naturae* (tr. 1727), regrets, in General Remarks on Ch. v, that the author did not include animals.

<sup>47</sup> A popular source for the Pythagorean doctrine was Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. xv. Compare Thomson, *Spring*, 336-378.

<sup>48</sup> One of the most important was the *Turkish Spy*, by Giovanni Paolo Marana, which went through twenty-six English editions between 1687 and 1770, and was widely imitated (see Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England*, Appendix BI). Another was Montaigne's *Essays*, translated by Cotton 1685-6 (see Bk. I, Ch. xxii; Bk. II, Ch. xi and xii, especially pp. 135-75, Bohn's Library).

istic notions, and is represented most strikingly in deistic poets like Thomson.<sup>49</sup> It is cited here, however, merely to confirm the argument that Baker is quite in harmony with Shaftesbury and that he may be regarded, therefore, as an early member of the school.

Soame Jenyns's *An Essay on Virtue* (1734), written when deism was at its height, demands special mention because it is the most vicious of all this group of poems in its attack on Christian ethics. His principal grievance is the old charge of the deists, that so-called religion makes a man unnatural and therefore immoral. To be good, according to Jenyns as well as Shaftesbury, man needs only to follow the dictates of nature:—<sup>50</sup>

How easy is our yoke! how light our load!  
 Did we not strive to mend the laws of God!  
 For his own sake no duty he can ask,  
 The common welfare is our only task:  
 For this sole end his precepts, kind and just,  
 Forbid intemp'rance, murder, theft, and lust,  
 With ev'ry act injurious to our own  
 Or others' good, for such are crimes alone:  
 For this are peace, love, charity, enjoin'd,  
 With all that can secure and bless mankind.  
 Thus is the public safety virtue's cause,  
 And happiness the end of all her laws;  
 For such by nature is the human frame,  
 Our duty and our interest the same.  
 "But hold," cries out some puritan divine,  
 Whose well-stuffed cheeks with ease and plenty shine,

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<sup>49</sup> See *Spring*, 236-41, 336-78, 387-93, 702-28; *Summer*, 220-40, 267-80, 416-22; *Autumn*, 359-457, 980-7, 1172-1207; *Winter*, 240-64, 788-93, 815-33; *Liberty* III, 32-70.

<sup>50</sup> "What Soame Jenyns says upon the subject is not to be minded; he is a wit. No, Sir; to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest, or some other motive."—Dr. Johnson (Boswell, III, p. 40). Jenyns's view underwent a change (see *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, Letter v).

"Is this to fast, to mortify, refrain,  
 And work salvation out with fear and pain?"  
 We own the rigid lessons of their schools  
 Are widely diff'rent from these easy rules;  
 Virtue, with them, is only to abstain  
 From all that nature asks, and covet pain;  
 Pleasure and vice are ever near a-kin,  
 And, if we thirst, cold water is a sin;  
 Heaven's path is rough and intricate, they say,  
 Yet all are damn'd that trip, or miss their way;  
 God is a being cruel and severe,  
 And man a wretch, by his command plac'd here,  
 In sunshine for a while to take a turn,  
 Only to dry and make him fit to burn.

Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733-4) falls in the same category; it is a deistic poem evidently indebted to Shaftesbury, but there is no reference to him.<sup>51</sup> It raises a number of special considerations due to the additional influence of Bolingbroke and others; but fortunately, in order to come at Shaftesbury's effect on Pope's theory of benevolence, we may take for granted various facts which have become fully established. In the first place, it is certain that Bolingbroke, whom Pope cited as the sole authority for his ideas, drew much of his own system from Shaftesbury; but on account of a passage in the *Characteristics* which reflects on him for deserting the Whigs,<sup>52</sup> he deliberately omitted from his tedious review of philosophy all direct reference to Shaftesbury's system. J. M. Rob-

<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere Pope ridiculed the *Moralists*. "After borrowing so largely from this treatise, our author should not, methinks, have ridiculed it as he does, in the Fourth Book of the *Dunciad*, ver. 417" —J. Warton (*Essay on Pope*, 1806, II, p. 94, note). Without citing his evidence, Professor Fowler says that Pope did mention both the *Inquiry* and the *Moralists* as sources for the *Essay* (*op. cit.*, p. 152, note). Grudzinski makes the same unsupported assertion (*op. cit.*, p. 100).

<sup>52</sup> Vol. II, p. 262. Bolingbroke is not mentioned by name; but see Editor's note.

ertson asserts that the *Essay* is "in large part pure Shaftesbury filtered through Bolingbroke."<sup>53</sup> In the second place, it is known that Pope borrowed directly from various sources, and that one of the most important is the *Moralists*. This view, advanced by Voltaire,<sup>54</sup> Warton,<sup>55</sup> Warburton,<sup>56</sup> and others in the eighteenth century is not questioned.<sup>57</sup> That Pope elsewhere mentioned Shaftesbury only to ridicule him needs no further explanation than the attitude of his patron. In addition, there are two other important authorities cited for the *Essay*: King's *De Origine Mali* (1702) and Leibnitz's *Théodicée* (1710). The contribution of the latter is, I think, purely conjectural; but the insertion of neither King nor Leibnitz affects the main question under present consideration. The passages rightly or wrongly attributed to them relate only to details of theology, particularly to the question of God's providence; from the nature of their work they could have yielded no more. Pope's theory of benevolence is clearly due to Bolingbroke or Shaftesbury or both. Curiously enough, the commentators have confined themselves to the triangular agreement of the three; no attempt has been made to study Pope's views in the light of certain differences which distinguish Bolingbroke's theory of benevolence from Shaftesbury's. And the study of these at once explains some inconsistencies of the *Essay* and demonstrates the hold which the *Characteristics* had established on the popular mind.

<sup>53</sup> *Characteristics*, I, p. xxv. Compare T. Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 151; Morel, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

<sup>54</sup> *Lettres sur les Anglais*, Let. xxii.

<sup>55</sup> *Essay on Pope*, Sect. ix. See also his ed. of Pope.

<sup>56</sup> *Vindication*, etc. and ed. of Pope.

<sup>57</sup> See Elwin's and Mark Pattison's notes on the *Essay* and Paul Vater, *Pope und Shaftesbury*, Halle, a. S., 1897.

Bolingbroke's suggestions were conveyed to Pope partly in conversations "often interrupted, often renewed" and partly in writing. Pope is said by Lord Bathurst to have had before him at the time of writing a special outline drawn up by Bolingbroke;<sup>58</sup> but the only record which we have of the instructions given is in the *Letters* and the *Fragments* which were "thrown upon paper in Mr. Pope's lifetime, and at his desire," and published for the first time in the posthumous edition of Bolingbroke's works (1754). There are in the *Fragments*, as the author admits, some alterations, and parts were written after what we have of the incomplete *Essay* had already been published; these were evidently for the further guidance of Pope, who planned originally to extend the poem. There is no reason for supposing that this printed material, which fills two huge volumes of the latest edition of Bolingbroke,<sup>59</sup> does not represent an accurate statement of his instructions; and it is on the basis of these that we must calculate the differences between the views of Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury.

There are differences in both theology and ethics, and in the main, though not consistently, Pope follows Bolingbroke. Theologically Shaftesbury would not have encouraged Pope's adoption of the very ancient view:

Know then thyself. Presume not God to scan,  
The proper study of mankind is man.

He insisted constantly on the study of man;<sup>60</sup> but he had little or none of Bolingbroke's vicious contempt for the supposition that human reason is capable of arriving at a knowledge of the divine nature, a view which Boling-

<sup>58</sup> See Elwin's introductory remarks, II, pp. 261 ff.

<sup>59</sup> Four vols., Philadelphia, 1841 (to which all references below).

<sup>60</sup> *Characteristics*, I, pp. 90-4, 144, 185, 190-3; II, pp. 274-5, 286



broke attacked with wearisome frequency in his opposition to Clarke.<sup>61</sup> It will be observed that here, and wherever else the two differ, Shaftesbury is far more flattering to man's nature. Under this difference is comprehended all of Bolingbroke's covert attacks on the ethics of the *Characteristics*. He followed the Cambridge Platonists and Shaftesbury only to the extent of considering benevolence the supreme Law of Nature and the one possibility of human happiness; beyond this point he pursued a system at times almost in harmony with Hobbes and Mandeville. Allowing the desirability of benevolence, he makes it very difficult of attainment. With him it is not a matter of instinct. Bolingbroke had no greater tolerance for Shaftesbury's moral sense and intuitive benevolence than Mandeville had. These were mere "Platonic whimsies." "They affirm," he said, "that they have . . . a moral sense, that is, an instinct by which they distinguish what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or disagreeable intellectual sensation accordingly, without the trouble of observation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthusiasts in ethics, and to make natural religion as ridiculous, as some of their brothers have made revealed religion, by insisting on the doctrine of an inward light."<sup>62</sup> Instead of the two sets of affections provided by Shaftesbury's formula, self-love and social, man has according to Bolingbroke only an instinctive self-love. This, he admitted, has a rudimentary social tendency in that it prompts man to associate with his fellows; but this instinct is no more than that of the lower animals and is limited to physical enjoyment. It not only fails to con-

<sup>61</sup> Vol. III, pp. 51, 52, 109, 116, 210, 324; IV, Frag. i, pp. 118-9, 131, Frag. ii, pp. 132-5, 137-8, Frag. vi, p. 166, Frag. viii, pp. 175-7, Frag. xx, p. 233, Frag. xli, pp. 319-22, Frag. xlvii, pp. 350-1, Frag. xlviii, pp. 355-6, Frag. xlix, pp. 356-60, Frag. l, pp. 360-3.

<sup>62</sup> Vol. IV, Frag. vi, pp. 167-8. Cf. Vol. III, pp. 396-401.

duct man beyond this embryonic social state, but is an active enemy to true social development. The virtue of benevolence, and indeed all virtue, is to be acquired only by means of the reason. There is an incessant conflict between the various passions arising from natural self-love, which seeks mere pleasure, and the dictates of reason, which seeks genuine happiness.<sup>63</sup> In this conflict the selfish passions have the advantage in that they act quickly under the influence of immediate pleasure, whereas the reason acts slowly under the influence of a greater but more remote good.<sup>64</sup> The sentimentalist Shaftesbury declares that goodness is the natural state of man; the rationalist Bolingbroke, that goodness results from a conquest of natural instinct by reason: they are the prototypes, respectively, of Rousseau and Voltaire.

In this difference is found the key to the most distinctive doctrine of Pope's ethical system. Warton's note to the contrary, Bolingbroke's theory is seen clearly in Pope's

Two principles in human nature reign;  
Self-love, to urge, and reason, to restrain;  
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,  
Each works its end, to move or govern all:  
And to their proper operation still,  
Ascribe all good; to their improper, ill.

Self-love still stronger, as its object's nigh;  
Reason's at distance, and in prospect lie:  
That sees immediate good by present sense;  
Reason, the future and the consequence.<sup>65</sup>

Nor is Pope guilty of inconsistency when he grafts upon this doctrine Mandeville's contention that the virtues them-

<sup>63</sup> Vol. iv, Frag. xxvi, p. 263; Frag. xxxiii, p. 290; Frag. li, pp. 369-72; Frag. lv, p. 390; Frag. lxiv, pp. 428-9.

<sup>64</sup> Vol. iv, Frag. lxv, pp. 432-3; Frag. lxvi, pp. 433-4.

<sup>65</sup> Second Epistle, 53-74. Both Bolingbroke and Pope were probably influenced by Bacon (see Bowles's note).

selves arise from vices properly controlled by reason.<sup>66</sup> Bolingbroke does not develop the thesis, but it is implied and thoroughly in keeping with his assumptions.

In the *Essay* and the *Epistles* Pope's occasional emphasis on the "ruling passion" as the source of the chief virtue or of the chief vice, according as it is or is not controlled by reason, is a faithful development of this rationalistic view of ethics as opposed to the sentimentalism of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. Like the old Calvinistic doctrine of man's depravity, it justifies Bolingbroke and Pope in their practical suspicion of human nature—a suspicion far more natural to them than Shaftesbury's genial flattery, and corroborated no doubt by their intimate knowledge of themselves. Thus it came that though both Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury attached supreme moral importance to nature's law of benevolence as the only means of happiness, the theory of intuitive social affection led Shaftesbury to regard the ideal of universal philanthropy a practical dream, while the insistence upon the conflict between instinct and reason led Bolingbroke to the gloomy conclusion that, since social virtue is pitted against great odds, at best our lot here will always be "a mixed happiness." In poetry Thomson reflects the first view, and Pope, despite much criticism to the contrary, reflects the second. So far his teaching, which undoubtedly accords with his predilections, is consistent also with the philosophical tenets of his model.

He was unable, however, to maintain throughout the *Essay* the fine distinction involved, and his failure to do so explains one inconsistency of the poem which has never been assigned to its exact cause. Pope's awkwardness is

<sup>66</sup> See, however, a remark of Pope's quoted by Spence, *Anecdotes*, p. 9.

due largely to himself, for he was incapable of sustained logic; but partly also to Bolingbroke, whose phrasing at times obscures his original quarrel with the Platonists. For example, such sentences as the following read like Shaftesbury's formula: "Sociability is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter."<sup>67</sup> The fact is Bolingbroke found it a very delicate matter to represent natural instinct as being at once an embryonic social motive and also an impediment to genuine social development. Even if such a discrimination is valid, it is difficult to handle. To refute Hobbes, he needed the first assumption; to refute the Platonists, he needed the second. In his attempt to appropriate for his own purpose most of Shaftesbury's refutation of Hobbes, he came perilously near admitting the very doctrine of Shaftesbury which he was constantly denying. In the same manner his poetical disciple sets out boldly with self-love opposed to reason; but later, in his anxiety to emphasize the beauty of benevolence, he finds his hypothetical man duly equipped with self-love and social, both of which seem to be instinctive. For example, the third Epistle closes:

So two consistent motions act the soul;  
And one regards itself, and one the whole.  
Thus God and Nature linked the general frame,  
And bade Self-love and Social be the same.<sup>68</sup>

The most illuminating comment on this passage is one made by Bolingbroke himself, who was quick to detect signs of Pope's defection from the cause of reason to that of moral instinct. "That true self-love and social are the same, as you have expressed a maxim, I have always

<sup>67</sup> Vol. iv, Frag. xxv, p. 297.

<sup>68</sup> Warton's note is clearly and radically wrong.

thought most undeniably evident; or that the author of nature has so constituted the human system, that they coincide in it, may be easily demonstrated to any one who is able to compare a very few clear and determinate ideas. But it will not follow, that he to whom this demonstration is made, nor even he who makes it, shall regulate his conduct according to it, nor reduce to practice what is true in speculation. We are so made, that a less immediate good will determine the generality of mankind, in opposition to one that is much greater, even according to our own measure of things, but more remote, and an agreeable momentary sensation will be preferred to any lasting and real advantage which *reason alone can hold out to us, and reflection alone can make us perceive*. . . . The influence of reason is slow and calm, that of the passions sudden and violent. Reason therefore might suggest the art that served to turn the passions on her side."<sup>69</sup>

Pope's *Essay on Man* thus becomes a conspicuous proof of the literary ascendancy attained by the *Characteristics*. It is indebted to Shaftesbury in three ways: in the first place, many of the ideas contributed by Bolingbroke came originally from his opponent; in the second place, the phrasing of Pope indicates that he sometimes borrowed from Shaftesbury directly what he might have found also in Bolingbroke; and in the third place, Pope, who was under the special tutelage of his friend, could not wholly refrain from that particular aspect of Shaftesbury's theory which Bolingbroke endeavored to controvert. The extent to which he did actually succeed in applying Bolingbroke's theory of benevolence as opposed to Shaftesbury's is what differentiates the *Essay* from the other poems so far ex-

<sup>69</sup> Vol. III, Essay III, p. 224. The italics are not in the original. I am surprised that this passage has been neglected by commentators.

amined in this study. The other poets were not subjected to Bolingbroke's own statement until after the publication of his works by Mallet in 1754, and they seem in the meantime not to have been affected by Pope's vague and inconsistent reproduction.<sup>70</sup> Though his example must have encouraged the later productions of the "benevolists," it is significant that the small poets cite as their authority Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Thomson rather than Pope. Those who wrote after the publication of Bolingbroke showed no greater inclination to adopt him, and Isaac Hawkins Browne made a special point of attacking him.<sup>71</sup>

### III

The poetry of benevolence so far considered, though not written necessarily by avowed deists, is based on the assumption of Natural Religion and antagonizes the old orthodox position. Since these deistical poems, however, represent by no means the whole output of poetry written under George II. to recommend benevolence, it remains now to be considered whether Shaftesbury probably influenced those poems which are less definitely associated with his peculiar theology.

His opposition to revealed religion continued to be a thorn in the flesh of the orthodox.<sup>1</sup> Naturally enough, some of them also attacked his system of independent ethics. Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* introduces a philosopher whose moral code is summed up in "this simple and intel-

<sup>70</sup> Lord Paget's *An Essay on Human Life* (1734) is an exception.

<sup>71</sup> *Fragmentum, I. H. B. completum. Anti-Bolingbrokius, etc.*, London, 1769.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Cure of Deism, etc.* (1736, 1737, 1739); *Deism Revealed, etc.* (1751); J. Ogilvie, D.D., *An Inquiry into the Causes of Infidelity . . . of the Times, etc.* (1783).

ligible maxim—that deviation from nature is deviation from happiness”; but after considerable explanation, the prince decided “that this was one of those sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer.”<sup>2</sup> Fielding ridiculed the doctrine of “the fitness of things” by assigning it to Square, and to the assertion that virtue produces happiness and vice, misery, he offered “but one objection, namely, that it is not true.”<sup>3</sup> Smollett put “the greatest part of that frothy writer’s rhapsody” in the mouth of the philosophical doctor in *Peregrine Pickle*,<sup>4</sup> and accounted for the ruin of Miss Williams in *Roderick Random* by making her a disciple of Shaftesbury, Tindal, and Hobbes.<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Mary Barber, a writer of temporary importance, vented her prejudice against deistical morality in the following passage from a poem inappropriately addressed *To Mr. Pope: Intreating him to write Verses to the Memory of Thomas, late Earl of Thanet* (pub. 1734):

Ye vain pretenders to superior sense,  
 Ye empty boasters of beneficence,  
 Who, in the *scorners seat*, exulting, sit,  
 And vaunt your impious raillery for wit,  
 The Gospel-Rule defective you pretend,  
 When you the social duties recommend:  
 In Thanet see them heighten’d and refin’d;  
 In Thanet see the friend of human kind;  
 Heighten’d by Faith, see ev’ry virtue’s force:  
 By Faith, the surest sanction, noblest source.

Free-thinkers, Moralists, on you I call,  
 Can Thanet’s worth be equall’d by you all?

Similar protests abound in the minor poetry of the period,<sup>6</sup> and a few of the small poets still persisted in recommend-

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xxii: “The Happiness of a Life Led according to Nature.”

<sup>3</sup> *Tom Jones*, Bk. xv, Ch. i.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. xliii. Cf. Ch. xxiv, lvii, lxx.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. xxii.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *To The Rev. Mr. Layng. Occasion’d by his*

ing social duties by means of the old-fashioned forecast of the day of judgment.<sup>7</sup> The most formidable opposition offered by poetry to deism in general is that of Edward Young, whose *Night Thoughts* (1742-5), written primarily to rebuke Pope's omission of immortality from the scheme of his *Essay*, was regarded as the official apology for Christianity. Admitting the force of reason in religion, the uselessness of miracles, and the eternal laws imprinted on nature, he contended that Christianity is as reasonable and natural as deism, but that the addition of faith is essential, and that mercy is not, as the deists implied, the sole attribute of God. In his ethical utterances he sternly denounced the theory of natural goodness; in fact, the orthodox could not maintain their opposition to Mandeville on this one point without doing violence to their accepted theology and probably their real conviction. Young's chief quarrel, however, was with the Shaftesburian moralists that virtue is its own reward and not in need of future recompense.

"Has virtue, then, no joys?"—Yes, joys dear bought.  
Talk ne'er so long, in this imperfect state,  
Virtue and vice are at eternal war,  
Virtue's a combat; and who fights for nought?  
Or for precarious, or for small reward?  
Who virtue's self-reward so loud resound,  
Would take degrees angelic here below,  
And virtue, while they compliment, betray,  
By feeble motives and unfaithful guards.

. . . . .

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*Sermon on Mutual Benevolence* (Anonymous, 1746), Fawkes and Woty, *Poet. Cal.*, v, p. 118; Thomas Hobson, *Christianity the Light of the Moral World* (1745).

<sup>7</sup> In 1757 two poems entitled *The Day of Judgment* were presented for the Seatonian Prize at Cambridge, by G. Bally and R. Glynn. The first was published independently, London, 1757; the second appears in *Poet. Cal.*, xii, pp. 20-30.



Rewards and punishments make God ador'd;  
And hopes and fears give conscience all her power.<sup>8</sup>

Opposing his orthodoxy to the special argument of intuitive social affection, Young declared,

Some we can't love, but for the Almighty's sake.

But such opposition was less thorough than these opponents themselves believed. That new ethical principles were invading the stronghold of the "Gospel-Rule" is evident from the examples of Butler and the other Christian moralists; without setting aside the authority of precept, they were giving ethics an independent foundation in nature. In taking this step, they were indebted chiefly to Shaftesbury, whose theology they abhorred. In the Preface to the 1729 edition of *Fifteen Sermons* (1726),<sup>9</sup> Butler, for example, acknowledged that, despite his exception to some details of Shaftesbury's system, it is in the main authoritative. Likewise "Estimate" Brown's review of the *Characteristics*, though at many points antagonistic, stoutly champions Shaftesbury's general conclusion against the doctrine of Mandeville.<sup>10</sup> Their example, which probably had no effect on literature, is symptomatic of Shaftesbury's gradual conversion of orthodoxy to independent ethics in general and to his special emphasis upon

<sup>8</sup> *Night VII.*

<sup>9</sup> Note the importance attached to Butler's statement by W. Hazlitt, "Self-Love and Benevolence," *New Monthly Mag.*, Oct. and Dec., 1828.

<sup>10</sup> *Essays on the Characteristics*, by John Brown, M. A., 1751. Those parts of his criticism which were unfavorable provoked three replies: Charles Bulkley, *A Vindication of Lord Shaftesbury on the Subject of Ridicule* (1751) and *A Vindication of Lord Shaftesbury on the Subjects of Morality and Religion* (1752); and *Animadversions on Mr. Brown's Three Essays on the Characteristics*, authorship unknown.

benevolence as a natural impulse. Just as the orthodox had all along endeavored to prove that the deists had no monopoly on reason, they were now equally determined to contest the superior claim of the deists to natural benevolence, and it was with particular reluctance that they mentioned Shaftesbury among the opponents of revealed religion.<sup>11</sup>

The resulting compromise so far obliterated the line between the ethical assumptions of the more liberal Christians and of the moderate deists that the poetry of benevolence came to be less distinctive of the author's religious affiliations. Many of the less specialized poems occupy this middle ground. To whichever party the writers adhered, whether they were deists or Christians or "Christian deists," they presented the beauty of benevolence, or "good-nature," in a manner different from the earlier orthodox formula, but confined themselves to a statement so general and so free from minute controversial details that, if we except a few old-fashioned sticklers for the unaided "Gospel-rule," their poems were now inoffensive to all parties. The volume of such poetry is immense and was written by men of the most varied beliefs. Some of the writers were in complete sympathy with Shaftesbury, some were skeptical of various details, and some were on occasion openly hostile to him. Acknowledged or not, however, their indebtedness to "the founder of the benevolent school of philosophy," at first hand or second, is obvious. In the first place, the fashion which they followed in poetry

<sup>11</sup> "It gives me a real concern, that among the writers who have appeared against revealed religion, I am obliged to take notice of the noble author of the *Characteristics*. Some indeed are not willing to allow that he is to be reckoned in this number . . . and yet it cannot be denied, that there are many things in his books, which seem to be evidently calculated to cast contempt upon Christianity and the holy Scriptures." J. Leland, *op. cit.*, I, Letter v (1754).

was popularized by Shaftesbury's deistical adherents; in the second place, their ability to adopt the fashion without giving open offense to the orthodox was due to his partial conquest of the traditional belief. The class is sufficiently illustrated by Henry Fielding's *Of Good Nature* (1743);<sup>12</sup> Lyttelton's *A Monody* (1747);<sup>13</sup> John Armstrong's *Of Benevolence* (1751); Christopher Smart's *On Good Nature* (1760); William Dodd's *Sacred to Humanity, The Man of Southgate*, and *An Hymn to Good Nature* (1760); William Stevenson's *On Riches*, and *The Progress of Evening, or The Power of Virtue* (1765); Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's *On Benevolence*; and Thomas Blacklock's *An Hymn to Benevolence* (1746). In some of these poems, as well as in those which are openly deistical, there are evidences of the *Characteristics* not only in idea, but also in phrasing. Even Young was not wholly immune. His designation of God as "the great Philanthropist" is, according to his editor, the Reverend J. Mitford, an example of very bad taste;<sup>14</sup> certainly it is a concession to deistic theology out of harmony with some of his strictures. With similar inconsistency, Young, in the following passage, recommends the natural impulse to benevolence exactly as the disciples of Shaftesbury were doing:

Nothing in nature, much less conscious being,  
Was e'er created solely for itself:  
Thus man his sovereign duty learns in this  
Material picture of benevolence.  
And know, of all our supercilious race,

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<sup>12</sup> One of a collection of poems published by Miller. Later the author spoke of them apologetically as "productions rather of the heart than of the head," and they have since been omitted from some of the best editions of Fielding's works.

<sup>13</sup> Ridiculed by Smollet in his *Burlesque Ode*.

<sup>14</sup> Young's *Poetical Works*, Aldine ed., I, pp. xxxix-xl.

Thou most inflammable! thou wasp of men!  
 Man's angry heart, inspected, would be found  
 As rightly set, as are the starry spheres;  
 'Tis nature's structure, broke by stubborn will,  
 Breathes all that uncelestial discord there.  
 Wilt thou not feel the bias nature gave? <sup>15</sup>

Isaac Hawkins Browne's *De Animi Immortalite* (1754), written, like Young's *Night Thoughts*, to demonstrate Pope's error in omitting considerations of future reward and punishment, exhibits Young's tendency much more clearly. This was one of the most popular didactic poems of the time; there were three translations of it in the year of its publication,<sup>16</sup> and a fourth in 1765.<sup>17</sup> The fact that Soame Jenyns immediately translated it should have been enough to cast suspicion on its pure orthodoxy. The following passage coincides exactly with the fashionable doctrine of natural religion in its sanction of benevolence as a dictate of nature:

The laws of life why need I call to mind,  
 Obeyed by birds, and beasts of every kind;  
 By all the sandy desert's savage brood,  
 And all the numerous offspring of the flood;  
 Of these none uncontroul'd and lawless rove,  
 But to some destin'd end spontaneous move.  
 Led by that instinct, heaven itself inspires,  
 Or so much reason, as their state requires;  
 See all with skill acquire their daily food,  
 All use those arms, which Nature has bestow'd;  
 Produce their tender progeny, and feed  
 With care parental, whilst that care they need!  
 In these lov'd offices completely blest,  
 No hopes beyond them, nor vain fears molest.  
 Man o'er a wider field extends his views;  
 God through the wonders of his works pursues;  
 Exploring thence His attributes and laws,

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<sup>15</sup> *Night IX.*

<sup>16</sup> By Soame Jenyns, Richard Grey, William Hay.

<sup>17</sup> By J. Cromwell.

Adores, loves, imitates th' Eternal Cause;  
For sure in nothing we approach so nigh  
The great example of divinity,  
As in benevolence: the patriot's soul  
Knows not self-centered for itself to roll,  
But warms, enlightens, animates the whole:  
Its mighty orb embraces first his friends,  
His country next, then man; nor here it ends,  
But to the meanest animal descends.  
Wise Nature has this social law confirm'd,  
By forming man so helpless and unarmed;  
His want of others' aid, and power of speech  
T' implore that aid, this lesson daily teach.  
Mankind with other animals compare,  
Single how weak and impotent they are!  
But, view them in their complicated state,  
Their powers how wondrous, and their strength how great,  
When social virtue individuals joins,  
And in one solid mass, like gravity combines!  
This then's the first great law by Nature giv'n,  
Stamp'd on our souls, and ratify'd by Heav'n;  
All from utility this law approve,  
As every private bliss must spring from social love.

Moreover, the following extract from Grey's translation indicates that the author practically contradicts his main thesis of the necessity of future reward:

Base and mean  
Is that man's virtue, who does therefore well  
That after Death he may be paid for't. He  
Is truly good, whom, future hopes apart,  
Virtue's sweet charms, and Honesty's plain path,  
Lead of themselves to what is fair and fit,  
Superior to regard of every kind.

#### IV

An exhaustive study of benevolent theory in poetry would necessitate the further inclusion of poems on charity and social reform like those referred to in the discussion of Thomson; in these the same arguments for benevolence

are to be found, but the main object of the writers is to encourage and direct the practice itself. For the present purpose it is sufficient merely to intimate the extent of such literature and its possible effect on the moral conduct of the period. Malone expressed great contempt for the "benevolists" as men who talked much about virtue and did little to promote it.<sup>1</sup> As a general charge, this would be manifestly unjust. There was a very intimate contact between the ideals of literature and of society. The same writers who persistently lauded the benevolent disposition converted it into a practical force for the encouragement, if not the initiation, of all the numerous philanthropies of the day. These appeals are made, not only in literature professing such charitable purpose, but in the most unexpected connections, where frequently the moral lesson is at the sacrifice of artistic effect. They are to be found in the work of all versifiers, from Pope<sup>2</sup> and Thomson to the mere scribblers, some of the poets proposing charity on the old theological ground of future reward, but most of them on the more fashionable principle that active compassion is the perfection of the "natural temper." Some of this sentiment, was, of course, affected for literary pop-

<sup>1</sup>His opinion is quoted by Sir James Prior, *Life of Edmund Malone*, London, 1860, p. 427: "Mr. Gilbert Cooper was the last of the *benevolists*, or sentimentalists, who were much in vogue between 1750 and 1760, and dealt in *general* admiration of virtue. They were all tenderness in *words*; their finer feelings evaporated in the moment of expression, for they had no connection with their practice." A. W. Ward takes exception to this stricture (*The Poems of John Byrom*, Chetham Soc., I (2), 449).

<sup>2</sup>Pope's case is instructive; he was apparently following the example of Thomson. In his early poetry there is no plea for charity; but after he began to "moralise" his song, such passages became frequent (see *Moral Essays*, Epistles III, IV, and *Epilogue to the Satires*). Fielding praises these passages, especially the first, in *Joseph Andrews*, Bk. III, Ch. vi.

ularity; such imitation, however, is a tribute to the practical appeal and genuine motive of the movement as a whole, and the avidity with which the public read this versified philosophy indicates that the age found in such literature a faithful presentation of its chief social slogan. There is, moreover, a direct connection between this constant poetising of benevolence and charity and the extensive practical charity which signalized the reign of George II. In the *Champion* for February 16, 1740, Fielding says: "This virtue hath shone brighter in our time, than at any period which I remember in our annals." Johnson testifies similarly in the *Idler* for May 6, 1758: "But no sooner is a new species of misery brought to view, and a design of relieving it proposed than every hand is open to contribute something, every tongue is busied in solicitation and every art of pleasure is employed for a time in the interest of Virtue." Even John Brown's *Estimate*, which is pessimistic, concedes in 1757 that the charitable foundations recently established "are such indisputable proofs of a national humanity, as it were the highest injustice not to acknowledge and applaud." It is evident that charity was becoming, as a few writers of that period note,<sup>3</sup> a mere fashion. It was degenerating into sentimentalism unguided by discriminating judgment. To argue Shaftesbury's authority for either the good or the bad qualities of this sentimental program would be to repeat the evidence already adduced; if he stimulated many of the "benevolists" directly and most of them indirectly

<sup>3</sup> See T. W., Gent., *The Country Priest* (1746); Joseph Warton, *Fashion; a Satire*; William Kenrick, *On Moral Sentiment* (1768); Robert Lloyd, *Charity, A Fragment*; Christopher Smart, *Care and Generosity*; and the *Connoisseur* 98 (1755). Note also a pamphlet published anonymously, *Considerations on the Fatal Effects of the Present Excess of Public Charities, etc.*, London, 1763.

through Hutcheson and through poetical followers, he had a proportionate share in determining the general preoccupation of these same writers and their public with the practical application of his theory.<sup>4</sup>

That the humanitarian program of Shaftesbury's school had its old-fashioned limitations is true. Most of the solid benefits acquired during the ascendancy of his philosophy were confined to the accomplishment of private endeavor. The poets who followed him have been accused of hypocrisy for holding up a lofty ideal of individual benevolence and at the same time extolling a government which legalized abuses against the plainest dictates of humanity. This is notably the case of Thomson's *Liberty*, and the example was set by Shaftesbury himself. If this is a fault, however, it is a fault due, not to sentimental philosophy, but to Whiggism, which affected most of the poetry of the time. There was, in fact, some moral excuse for this loyalty: throughout much of this period the Act of Settlement was still contending with the Jacobite adherence to divine right, and certainly the future of social reform was safer in the hands of the Whigs than it would have been in those of the Stuarts. The Whig poets were justified also in praising British liberty at the expense of any previous *régime* in England and contemporary conditions in Europe. They were not wholly mistaken or insincere in defending Whig commercialism as a national philanthropy to relieve the distress of the lower classes. In supporting the Whig government they were fighting to hold the measure of individual right England had already acquired; <sup>5</sup> it is natural that the reforms proposed at this

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Rand discusses Shaftesbury's own philanthropy, private and public, *Regimen*, pp. vii, viii. Note particularly the Letter to John Wheelock (Shaftesbury's steward), Nov. 6, [1703], *idem*, p. 315.

<sup>5</sup> Of Shaftesbury, Dr. Rand says: "The political measures which



stage confined themselves principally to enlarging the sympathies of individual readers, and that literature, therefore, had more to say in favor of benevolence and charity than against legalized abuses. On these, however, the writers were not silent. Shaftesbury himself supported a successful bill for giving the accused right of counsel.<sup>6</sup> Thomson and his contemporaries protested against the inhumanity of prison laws, slavery, the criminal code, and various other evils; although they did not effect any material alterations in the law, they performed a practical service by educating the public conscience for the social reforms which logically followed—reforms with which we usually associate Howard, Wilberforce, Romilly, and others who perfected movements initiated long before. The agitation during the reign of George II. was not wholly new in literature, nor was it confined to the followers of Shaftesbury. But the revival of interest in such matters after the moral laxity under George I. was contemporaneous with the triumph of his sentimental benevolence; the interest displayed by poets, which was entirely new, was due chiefly to the example of Thomson; if we except the strictures of Defoe, the measures proposed were more openly critical of the law than any that had appeared before; and the still more radical agitation which followed, in and out of literature, derived its authority from the general belief in benevolence as the supreme virtue.

Against this conclusion, the popular view of deism im-

he most strongly supported at home were those which had for their aim the protection of the rights and liberty of the individual" (*Regimen*, pp. vii-viii). That he was not a dogmatist in politics is evident from the letter to Tiresias, Nov. 29, 1706, (*Regimen*, pp. 367-8); his defense of the British monarchy was based, not on theoretic grounds, but on the belief that no other form of government could subsist in England.

<sup>6</sup> *Regimen*, pp. xx, xxi. . . .

mediately urges the "shallow optimism" of Shaftesbury as an obstacle to reform. The objection is not without support from high authority; but that it is often exaggerated is so evident as hardly to deserve proof. By "Whatever is, is right" none of the deists meant more than to assert the goodness and providence of the Deity against the claims of grumbling atheists who, like Epicurus, saw in the evils and moral confusion of the world a negation of God. The assumption that this is "the best possible of all systems" is in its intent and application primarily theological and not political or social. Deists were not so besotted as to believe the details of human conduct and society literally in need of no alteration. They were, in fact, boastingly identified with the cause of social improvement; this claim was one of their chief weapons against the orthodox. Beyond this purely theological argument of God's providence, their views concerning the perfectibility of society represent all the various shades of confidence from optimism to pessimism. Relatively speaking, and in this sense, Shaftesbury was an optimist, and so were Thomson and various other poets of this school. We know that they underestimated the tenacity of evil and exaggerated man's instinctive response to the cause of suffering, but it was this optimism which gave the humanitarian movement in literature its real vigor. Those who cite deism as inefficient for the purposes of reform judge by an absolute rather than an historical standard. What is to be said of the traditional attitude of the Church with which deism came into open conflict? Far from trying to equalize the lot of human beings or to remove the abuses incident to the social system, the Church defended all inequalities as part of a divine dispensation which wisely subjects every soul to that particular influence best adapted to its spiritual development: the rich man's wealth affords

him an opportunity to cultivate the virtue of charity, and the poor man's poverty nurtures in him the fine flower of Christian resignation.<sup>7</sup> Such a view anticipated no real change of conditions; it contemplated merely the temporary assuagement of extreme suffering and complacently looked forward to a continuation of social evils predetermined by a wise Creator for the spiritual good of both victim and patron. The rectifying solvent was conveniently deferred to a future life. Christianity as it was then interpreted exerted a paralyzing influence on genuine reform, and real progress became possible only after deism had forced upon the dogmatists some of its more liberal ideas of human relations in this life.

The total evidence of Shaftesbury's influence would be greatly increased also by extending the study of literature beyond 1760; the selection of this year as a concluding date is largely arbitrary. In the later period his influence is slightly confused by the additional effect of Rousseau's example; but the general indications are that the popular appeal of the *Characteristics* continued unabated to the last decade of the century. It was supplemented, but not displaced, by more radical ideas of Rousseau's. A candid estimate of their relative influence would probably assign greater practical results to the Englishman: not only had he initiated the sentimental program which concluded with the violent performance of Rousseau, but he represented that degree of sentimentalism which satisfies the conservative bent of the average Britisher. The revolutionary doctrine superimposed by Rousseau affected, after all, no more than a small coterie, and for a brief period only. The case of Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality*

<sup>7</sup> See Robert Nelson, *Address*, etc., pp. 78, 79; J. Balguy, *Divine Rectitude*, London, 1730, pp. 58-9; William Dodd, *Gratitude. An Ode* (1760).

is not an unfair example of English timidity in the presence of Rousseau's proposals. The ideal Henry Moreland begins life with a strong inclination to discard clothes and revolt against organized society, but terminates his career by attaching himself to the cause of the English throne and turning Methodist. The very fact, however, that the early school of humanitarians did not go to the extent of denouncing Society root and branch, as Rousseau did a little later, partly accounts for the neglect of Shaftesbury by critics. There is in Rousseau's doctrine a touch of audacity which distracts attention from the amateur lectures of the earlier benevolists. He was indirectly responsible also for the sudden termination of Shaftesbury's long ascendancy: when the English perceived the revolutionary possibilities of sentimental benevolence, which had escaped Shaftesbury to be fully expounded by Rousseau and applied by the Revolutionists, their distrust extended to the comparatively innocuous doctrine of the *Characteristics*. Between 1711 and 1790 it commanded eleven English editions; after 1790 no new edition appeared for a century.<sup>8</sup>

## V

Even if Shaftesbury had in 1760 suddenly yielded his position to the superior influence of French sentimentalism, he would still deserve more attention than is accorded him by the historians of English literature. His importance arises not so much from novel proposals advanced as from the sureness with which he interpreted the vague predisposition of the age towards new modes of thought and feeling. The evidence adduced in this study—includ-

<sup>8</sup> The Reverend Wm. M. Hatch planned a complete edition, but published only one volume of it (1871).

ing the undeniable fact of his general popularity, the explicit citation of his ethics by various writers, the minute agreement of others, and the reluctant adoption of the essentials by still others—leads directly to a conclusion that affects only so-called historical criticism of literature. It seems to evince unmistakably that in an early stage of English philanthropy when the orthodox conception of moral obligation was considered inadequate, Shaftesbury afforded a doctrine with which poetry, as well as philosophy, argued the cause of social reform against the egoism of Epicurus, Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, and Mandeville; that by gradually ingratiating himself with all parties of benevolists, he became the main authority for English ideas of philanthropy during a period that witnessed a broadening of human sympathies, a preoccupation of society and literature with the cause of social amelioration, and the first general use of poetry as an organ of humanitarian theory. His connection with this change and its ultimate permanent effects on literature and society give additional weight to Dr. Rand's remark that the third Earl was "a most worthy predecessor to the noble and philanthropic seventh Earl of Shaftesbury."<sup>1</sup> If we confine ourselves wholly to his effect on literature, it may be well to recall that, whatever criticism may say about the strictly "literary" influences and changes, the fact of human moment in literature of the eighteenth century is that it became genuinely sympathetic.

This moral effect was not accomplished without some detriment to the literature which it humanized. Goldsmith's shrewd judgment concerning the injury to English prose through the continual but unsuccessful imitation of Shaftesbury's style notes one of the least faults which

<sup>1</sup> *Regimen*, p. vii.

followed in the wake of the *Characteristics*. The constant lauding of compassion and the apotheosis of benevolence resulted in a monotony of theme and phrase to be properly deprecated only by those who have read the minor verse of the mid-century. Although literary criticism has little or nothing to say on the subject, this influx of benevolence and charity was one of the principal causes for that excess of sentiment described by Sir Leslie Stephen as "a kind of mildew which spreads over the surface of literature at this period to denote a sickly constitution." What we condemn as sentimentalism in literature is the logical product of a society committed to the notion that God's one attribute is benevolence and man's chief perfection an imitation of it. The distinction between the humanitarian and the posturing sentimentalist is always difficult to define, for the enthusiastic preachments of the "benevolists" shade imperceptibly into the cant of mawkish sentiment. In the literature before Shaftesbury's vogue as well as in philosophy, there were already faint signs, especially in comedy, that public taste was moving towards a more sentimental interpretation of life; but unrestrained sentimentalism did not become a national characteristic until Shaftesbury's philosophy, which was itself merely one manifestation of the new ideal, had provided an authoritative defense of it. The habitual study and reproduction of this theory was at least a powerful agent in the formation of the popular temper which encouraged the flaccid emotionalism we find in most poetry of the period and in such prose fiction as *Pamela*<sup>2</sup> and *The Man of Feeling*. It is probable, indeed, that most humanitarian literature is too special and temporary in its appeal to be of per-

<sup>2</sup> See E. Schmidt, *Richardson, Rousseau und Goethe*, Jena, 1875, *passim*.

manent significance, and the faults to which it is liable naturally manifested themselves strikingly in the first reaction against the harshness of the egoists and the traditional theology.

Whatever the literary gain or loss, the humanitarian thesis, inclining always to an unreflective sensibility and requiring the constant check of the judgment, has since occupied a large place among the interests of English poetry. If ethical instruction is conceded to be a legitimate function of poetical art, Shaftesbury and his school deserve unqualified praise for cementing a connection between poetry and social questions that has performed a recognized service in the reformation of English morals; and in whatever light the addition of this function may be viewed by the appreciative critic of literature, the historical fact remains that Shaftesbury's ethical theory was primarily responsible for a moral tone which is one of the chief distinctions between the literature before and after the adoption of him by English poets, and which with various modifications has persisted to our own time.

C. A. MOORE.